

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method of processing an electronically placed order, said method comprising the steps of:

a) receiving said electronically placed order, said order comprising a product configuration specified by a user;

b) determining whether said product configuration is a valid configuration, wherein valid product configurations are determined by a set of rules that change over time;

c) if said product configuration is a valid configuration, continuing the processing of said electronically placed order;

d) receiving an approval for said order; and

e) if less than a pre-determined period of time has expired between said receiving said electronically placed order and said receiving said approval for said order, continuing the processing of said order without determining whether said product configuration determined to be valid in said step c) is still valid.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 1 further comprising the steps of:

if more than said pre-determined period of time has expired between receiving said electronically placed order and receiving said approval for said order, determining whether said product configuration is still valid; and

rejecting said order if said product configuration is invalid.

4. (Original) The method of Claim 1 wherein said pre-determined period of time is based on an expected amount of time for said order to be approved.

5. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 1 further comprising the step of:

altering a parameter specifying said pre-determined period of time.

6. (Original) The method of Claim 1 wherein said electronically placed order further comprises fields for required order processing information.

7. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 6 further comprising the step of:

f) determining whether all said required order processing information has been provided.

8. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 6 further comprising the step of:

f) determining whether all said required order processing information is valid.

9. (Original) The method of Claim 1 wherein said step a) comprises receiving said order via the Internet.

10. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method of expediting orders for configurable products, said method comprising the steps of:

a) receiving a user who is electronically transferred from an electronic procurement application to a web site operable to access an ordering application;

b) said ordering application allowing an electronically placed order for a configurable product to be created, said ordering application determining whether said product configuration is a valid configuration, said order comprising product configuration information and required order processing information, wherein a product in said order is configured according to user specification;

c) allowing said order to be further processed without determining whether said required order processing information is complete and valid;

d) transferring an electronic copy of said order from said ordering application to said electronic procurement application;

e) said ordering application receiving an approval for said order;

f) after said approval is received, determining whether said required order processing information is complete and valid; and

g) if less than a pre-determined period of time has expired between the time said order was placed and the time said order was approved, continuing the processing of said order without determining whether said product configuration is still a valid configuration.

11. (Original) The method of Claim 10 wherein said step a) comprises the step of:

a1) receiving said user who is electronically transferred from a web site operable to access said electronic procurement application to said web site operable to access said ordering application.

12. (Original) The method of Claim 11 wherein said step e) comprises the step of:

e1) receiving said user who is electronically transferred from said web site for said electronic procurement application to said web site for said ordering application.

13. (Original) The method of Claim 10 wherein said step a) comprises the step of:

a1) receiving said user who is electronically transferred from a desktop computer that is running said electronic procurement application to said web site operable to access said ordering application.

14. (Original) The method of Claim 13 wherein said step e) comprises the step of:

e1) receiving said user who is electronically transferred from a desktop computer that is running said electronic procurement application to said web site operable to access said ordering application.

15. (Cancelled)

16. (Original) The method of Claim 10 further comprising the step of:

h) if more than a pre-determined period of time has expired between the time the order was created and the time the order was approved, determining whether said product configuration is valid.

17. (Cancelled)

18. (Original) The method of Claim 10 wherein said step d) comprises the step of:

d1) transferring said electronic copy of said order via an electronic message which is substantially compliant with the Extensible Markup Language (XML).

19. (Original) The method of Claim 10 wherein said step a) comprises the step of:

a1) authenticating said user before allowing said user to place said order.

20. (Original) The method of Claim 10 wherein said step a) comprises the step of:

a1) receiving said user without requiring said user to provide a password and user identification.

21. (Original) The method of Claim 20 wherein said step a1) comprises the step of authenticating said user by verifying a company identification.

22. (Original) The method of Claim 10 wherein said order further comprises service configuration information.

23. (Currently Amended) A computer readable medium having stored thereon program instructions for implementing a method for processing customer orders, said method comprising the steps of:

a) allowing the creation of an order for a configurable product, said order in incomplete form and comprising product configuration information and order processing information comprising a plurality of elements, wherein a product in said order is configured according to customer specification and at least one element of said plurality of elements is not provided by said user;

b) allowing said order to be further processed with at least one of said elements for said order processing information unspecified;

c) receiving said order electronically in complete form, wherein said at least one element is provided; [[and]]

d) after said complete order is received, determining whether said order processing information is valid; and

e) if less than a pre-determined period of time has expired between a time said order was placed and a time said order was approved,
automatically continuing the processing of said order without determining
whether said product configuration is still a valid configuration.

24. (Cancelled)

25. (Currently Amended) The computer readable medium of Claim 23 wherein said method further comprises the step of:

[[e]] determining whether optional order processing information that is not required to complete the order is valid.

26. (Currently Amended) Means for automatically processing an electronically placed order, comprising:

a) means for allowing electronic creation of said order, wherein a product in said order is configured according to customer specification and said order comprises fields of required order processing information;

b) means for determining whether said product configuration is valid;

c) means for receiving an approval for said order from said customer;

d) means for determining whether said required order processing information is valid and complete; and

e) means for determining if more than a pre-determined period of time has expired between the time the order was created and the time the order was approved, and if more than said pre-determined period of time has not expired continuing the processing of said order without determining whether said product configuration is still a valid configuration.

27. (Previously Presented) The means of Claim 26 further comprising means for determining whether said customer has authorization to create said order.